'6. I have been considering for some time whether the Standing Orders of the Council can be amended in the light of past experience to meet the greater convenience of hon. Members and to save Parliamentary time. I have asked you, Mr. President, the hon. the Leader of the House and the hon. Member leading the Opposition, if they will be kind enough to act as a small committee with me to examine in what direction, if any, alterations can be made and the result of our deliberations will be placed before hon. Members at the next meeting of the Council. There is one point, however, in this connexion to which I will refer now and which is entirely in the hands of hon. Members themselves. Every day I read through the questions that are to be asked and the replies thereto and I am struck by the frequency of the answer that there is no foundation in fact for the statement or the suggestion made in the question. I have no desire to curb the thirst for information of hon. Members and question time undoubtedly fulfils a very useful purpose, but I would submit to them that their own dignity demands that they should be sure any question they may put is founded on fact and not on mere supposition or hearsay.

'7. I do not intend to refer at any length to the work of the Joint Select Committee in London except to say that their task is being handled with due regard to its importance and that the Members of the Committee are conscientiously endeavouring to grapple with facts as they are so that they may evolve a constitution which shall enable this great Empire of India to take her rightful place in the comity of nations which constitutes the British Empire.' "

III.—(i) CONDOLENCE RESOLUTION ON THE DEATH OF DR. ANNIE BESANT.

*Dr. P. Subbarayan:—" Mr. President, Sir, I move—

'*that this Council places on record its deep sense of sorrow at the death of Mrs. Annie Besant.*'

" I do not think many words are needed from me to commend this resolution to this House. It is a well-known fact that Mrs. Besant took a foremost part in the struggle for home-rule, soon after the Great War. Her's was a dynamic personality, which gave impetus to the movement and if we are in a state of advance towards the fulfilment of our national aspirations the country owes a deep debt of gratitude to Mrs. Besant. Mrs. Besant's name will live not only for the work she did for India, but also for the world at large. She came of a great family of Irishmen and it is a well-known fact that one of her near relations held the place of Lord Chancellor—Lord Hatherly—and his work as Lord Chancellor is well known not only to lawyers, but also to public men. Mrs. Besant was married to Rev. Frank Besant but she found the ideals of Christianity as expounded by the orthodox church was not acceptable to her, and soon left Mr. Besant in order to work for the causes she held dear. Her work with regard to the uplift of the lowly and poor is well known. Afterwards, she threw herself into the Fabian

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movement and felt that a socialist commonwealth will be the ideal to work for. But soon after, she came under the influence of Madame Blavatsky and joined the Theosophical Society and succeeded to the presidentship of the Theosophical Society in the year 1895, and her work as a theosophist is well known in India and India will ever be grateful to her for the great work she has done in the field of education, both at Benares and here at Adyar. Not only India but many people in the world will mourn the great loss that has been caused by her death. I am sure her spirit lives and will be an inducement for future generation for constructive work."

* The hon. Sir MAHOMED USMAN:—"Mr. President, I beg to second the resolution moved by the hon. the Leader of the Opposition and take this opportunity of expressing on behalf of the Government of Madras our regret at the death of Dr. Besant."

* Mr. F. BIRLEY:—"Mr. President, Sir, I desire to associate myself on behalf of the European Group with the expressions of sympathy expressed in connexion with the death of Mrs. Annie Besant."

* The hon. the RAJA OF BOBBILI:—"On behalf of my Party, I consider it a privilege to associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. the Leader of the Opposition. In the death of Mrs. Annie Besant, the world has lost a great figure in the cause of humanity. Her activities were many-sided. Education was the main thing in her programme in which she has left a record of public service which can never be forgotten. Although there may not have been complete unanimity on her political activities, I am sure everyone will agree that she was undoubtedly a very sincere well-wisher and friend of India. Her knowledge of oriental lore and fascination for the east and sympathy with Indian aspirations found an outlet in a practical and tangible form and she founded the Central Hindu College, Benares, which formed the nucleus of the modern Hindu University, which is sure to interpret the spirit of Indian culture through the medium of modern education and, so long as this University exists, her name will be remembered as a benefactor of India. With these words I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution."

* Mrs. K. ALAMELUMANGATHAYARAMMA supported the motion by a Tamil speech.

The following is an English rendering of it:—

"Mr. President, Sir—Some of my brother councillors have spoken 11-15 a.m. in sympathetic terms of the late Dr. Besant. As I am a representative of women in this Council, I should like to say a few words. There is no doubt that Dr. Besant, after she came to India, did immense service to this country by her many-sided activities. She took great efforts to bring about reformation in Hindu Society, abolish differences between religion and religion, improve the prevailing educational system and, last but not least, create a mass consciousness in India for the freedom of the country from foreign rule. Her work in the religious sphere has been not a little responsible for the appreciable lessening of the number of converts from Hinduism to Christianity. Dr. Besant spent

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more than half of her life in India. A great follower of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, she was the moving soul and guiding spirit of the Theosiphical Movement.

"She arrived in India about forty years ago, and since then, she has been a great expounder of the principles of Hinduism. Her efforts in the field of education include the establishment of schools and colleges in different parts of the country, the publication of books and periodicals and the founding of the Central Hindu College at Benares.

"Though first she did not identify herself with the Congress movement, she joined it later and had the honour of presiding over an annual session of the Congress. She was of the view that Indians should not be content with progress in the religious sphere, but that they should advance greatly in the political sphere as well. It was with this object that she started 'The New India' in Madras and started a political association for the purpose of realizing her objects.

"Though born a woman, she possessed qualities of courage and statesmanship of an unrivalled character. As a speaker, she occupied the front-rank among politicians in India. Born in a poor family, by dint of perseverance and industry, she educated and equipped herself to play a great part in the political affairs of the land of her adoption. India can little afford to forget the services she has rendered to her political progress. Dr. Besant achieved great fame and renown as a politician, as an educationist, as a speaker and a religious reformer.

"The activities of the Theosophical Movement resulted in the lessening of the differences between religion and religion and community and community. Indians in general particularly liked her religious propaganda, because it brought about a feeling of brotherhood among the communities. This feeling was shown in inter-sectional, inter-caste and inter-racial marriages. There was also engendered a feeling of equality between the sexes.

"A characteristic feature of her courage, independence and individuality was shown when she argued her own case in the famous Alcyone case against Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar who was the Counsel for the other side.

"Though politically we had differences of opinion I want to take this opportunity of paying my tribute to a great woman of an alien land, who loved this country and adopted it and who inspired Indian womanhood to rise to its heights and achieve progress on sound and healthy lines. She had bewailed on many occasions that she had not the good fortune of being born in India. She loved this country and its people as few foreigners have done. She was a great patriot and a great leader. She died full of years and full of achievements. I deem it a melancholy privilege to support the condolence resolution."

The hon. the PRESIDENT:—"The motion before the House is—

'that this Council places on record its deep sense of sorrow at the death of Mrs. Annie Besant'."

The motion was carried in silence, all Members standing.